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SIPDIS

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USDA/FAS FOR BIOTECH GROUP

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SUBJECT: VOTE IN DECEMBER 8 COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN DECISION  
ON BT-11 SWEET CORN

1. In response to request in reftel, Post has followed up with Dutch officials on the BT-11 sweet corn vote in the EU Committee on the Food Chain.

2. According to our contacts, the Netherlands voted in favor of the Syngenta application for two reasons: it had received a favorable review from the European Food Safety Authority and The Netherlands is opposed to the moratorium on biotech approvals. The member states voting against the approval did so mainly because they want to wait until the new biotech legislation has been implemented in April 2004. A Dutch Ministry of Agriculture official told us The Netherlands doesn't agree that it is necessary to wait for implementation of the legislation next year.

3. One Dutch official told us that even though the new EFSA decided this specific GM product is safe, some national food safety authorities found this was not the case. The reasoning of these countries is that it should not be established that a GM product is not unsafe, but rather that there is evidence to conclude it is safe. SOBEL